

The Impact of Ethnic and Religious Diversity on Middle East and North African Stability

L'impact de la Diversité Ethnique et Religieuse sur la Stabilité du Moyen Orient et le Nord Africain

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Abstract

This study discusses the ethnic and religious diversity in the Middle East and North Africa and its role in the stability of the region. The study relies on the assumption that significant diversity can lead to conflict. Thus, this study aims to answer the question of whether this diversity leads to dissonance or not. The study uses a descriptive approach based on the study of interactions between a group of variables. And since the Middle East and North Africa have such a wide range of ethnic and religious groups, this study focuses on the most prominent actors in the region. The study shows how the enormous diversity in the region leads to disparities that frequently results in collision and conflict, endangering stability, and calls for the rise of positive, influential actors to bring perspectives closer and reduce conflicts.

Keywords: impact, Ethnic, religion, diversity, Middle East, North Africa.

Resumé

Cette étude examine la diversité ethnique et religieuse au Moyen-Orient et en Afrique du Nord et son rôle potentiel dans la stabilité de la région. L'étude est basée sur l'hypothèse que la diversité peut conduire à des conflits. Cette étude vise à déterminer si la diversité d'un groupe de personnes conduit à la tension ou à l'harmonie. L'étude utilise une approche descriptive basée sur l'étude des interactions entre un groupe de variables. Comme la région du Moyen-Orient et de l'Afrique du Nord (MENA) compte un large

éventail de groupes ethniques et religieux, cette étude se concentre sur les acteurs les plus importants de la région. L'étude montre comment la grande diversité de la région conduit à des inégalités qui conduisent souvent à des affrontements et des conflits, mettant en danger la stabilité et appelle à la montée en puissance d'acteurs positifs et influents pour rapprocher les perspectives et réduire les conflits.

Mots-clés : impact, Ethnique, religion, diversité, Moyen-Orient, Nord Africain

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1-INTRODUCTION

Culture is generally defined as a compound body which comprises knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other talents and habits acquired by people in a society. These elements are learnt, shared and passed down from a generation to another by members of a given community (Peacock, 1987, pp. 2-3). On this basis, culture provides us with a significant deal of human diversity which extends throughout all geographical areas of the globe.

Cultural diversity, which takes different forms and hues over time and space, is a feature of many societies, and it has numerous advantages for individuals, society, and humankind as a whole. One of the advantages of a dominant culture in a society is that it refines the personality of the individual according to a set of values, morals, and principles. Many of our perspectives of life and insights into existence are influenced by culture. It also serves as a basis for the development of character, as it aids in the direction of one's thoughts, feelings, and inclinations from an early age. Culture also assists individuals in distinguishing between right and wrong actions by giving society-appropriate standards and values. The inherited traditions and practices of a culture define convictions and beliefs, and shape how an individual thinks, acts, and interacts with others. This helps to explain why persons from the same culture have similar personality features.

Because the individual is the basic nucleus upon which societies are created, the influence of the dominant culture on him will unavoidably have an impact on society as a

whole. It is worth emphasizing that nowadays, we rarely come across a society with a single culture that is free of influences from other cultures. Dealing with people from other cultures, backgrounds, and experiences broadens horizons and helps individuals not only to accept and appreciate one another, but also to create trusting relationships and embrace the spirit of community cooperation. Similarly, it allows them to learn new abilities. This diversity provides a plethora of ideas that inspire introspection, invention, and the development of problem-solving skills (Vellnagel, 2020, p. 43) all of which provide peace and prosperity to everyone in the community circle.

The impact of culture on one society applies to the entire world, and what it accomplishes is the understanding and acceptance of cultural variations in a confined civilization, as well as the peoples of the world as a single population unit brought all together by humanity. The interaction of peoples with one another and the identification of ideas, beliefs, and ways of life which are different from those they were accustomed to in their countries results from the growth of peoples, the expansion of investments, and the movement of individuals to work or live in places whose cultures differ from their original homelands.

Furthermore, modern social media has opened up new avenues for individuals to learn about one another's cultures, and many virtual platforms have enabled dialogues and information exchange. Thus, understanding the differences makes it easier to accept the other and to coexist and deal with one another. People progress and grow as a result of things like the exchange of ideas, science, and economic transactions. Assistance and aid exchange enhances respect between peoples, improves affinity between them, and lessens racism and contempt for people of various cultures.

Multiculturalism is a sociological term that defines how a society interacts with cultural diversity, built on the presumption that individuals of often diametrically opposed cultures can peacefully coexist. The two basic multiculturalism theories that describe how different cultures are merged into a single civilization are called the "melting pot" and the "salad bowl". The melting pot hypothesis suggests that diverse groups would "melt together," leaving their own distinct traditions and eventually getting

totally incorporated into the prevailing nation. The salad bowl concept describes a diversified society in which people coexist while retaining at least some of their distinct traditional cultural characteristics(Trusty, 2002, p. 214)

Over time, the definition of the Middle East has shifted based on a variety of factors. It was occasionally expanded, and other times reduced. Not so long ago, the phrase 'Middle East' was used to refer to a set of countries with similar geography and cultures, such as Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, as well as Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar. Following that, the Middle East was expanded to encompass Afghanistan and Pakistan for political reasons, as well as countries from North Africa for historical, cultural, and political reasons. Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya were also included in this large region that came to be known as MENA(Driouchi, 2014, p. 86)

When it comes to cultural diversity, the Middle East and North -African region is one of the most diverse and rich places in the world. This cultural diversity developed over centuries and was refined through many events, including wars at times and peaceful interactions and dealings at others, to bring the region to its current state which is characterized by incredible diversity, not only between countries but also within countries, and even inside the same city, village, or clan.

Ethnic and religious diversity in the Middle East and North Africa is one of the most prominent traits of the region.This diversity is anchored in history, dating back to ancient times, and was influenced by a variety of circumstances and events. Arabs, Persians, Kerds, Turks, and Amazighs are the most dominant ethnic groups in the MENA region, with thousands or millions of individuals. There are undoubtedly dozens of other groups. However, the numerous battles and wars in this region are the source of the region's misfortunes. These peoples have witnessed conflicts at various times of their existence, and recent years have seen an increase in the intensity of these conflicts, which have spread from political arenas to media platforms and large-scale exchanges on media communication sites in a large way that indicates the depth of the divide that exists

between these societies and raises the question of whether one of the reasons for this struggle is the huge ethnic and religious variety of these communities or not.

The aim of this study is to examine the ethnic and religious variety in the Middle East and North Africa, and uncover its influence in the instability of the region. The research relies on a descriptive approach based on the investigation of interactions among a set of factors. Because the Middle East and North Africa are home to such a diverse range of ethnic and religious groups, this research concentrates on the most prominent players. The paper is divided into several sections, each of which focuses on a different ethnic or religious group in MENA and discusses its impact on the volatility of the region. This includes Arabs, Amazigh, Kurds, Sunni- Shiite conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

2-Key Ethnic and Religious Players in the MENA Region

2-1-Arabs

Arabs are an ethnic group that mostly inhabits Western Asia and North Africa, though the Arab diaspora has spread much over the world today. They speak Arabic, a language that evolved in the Arabian Peninsula. Most Arabs are Muslims. Military triumphs by troops from the Arabian Peninsula resulted in the expansion of Arab culture and religion. A large movement of people from Arabia into the Middle East happened during the conquests. Similarly, Arabs arrived to North Africa. They spread a new religion, language, culture, customs and practices to the region's native inhabitants.

The aim to promote Arab unity began in the twentieth century in reaction to a competition for dominance of the region in which the Ottomans and the West both competed. The Ottomans ruled a major chunk of the Middle East and North Africa at the same time that the West was striving to tighten its grip on the region. The Arabs saw this as a threat to their state and civilization. Many Arab countries were occupied by Western powers, who aimed to destroy their cultural and civilizational history while simultaneously plundering their resources for economic gain. Italy occupied Libya and Somalia. France colonized Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Syria, and Lebanon, and Britain

ruled the majority of Middle Eastern countries. From here, work began on creating a single entity whose foundations are based on Arab-Islamic philosophy as a common component for all Arabic-speaking countries

In the Levant and North Africa, the techniques concentrated on combining emotions and identification through religious and Arabic language tactics in order to construct an impenetrable fortress against Western influences and Ottoman Turkification. The Arabic language has been taught and promoted among Muslims since it is the language of the most important sources of Islamic law, the Qur'an and the Prophet's hadiths. Language spread helped to unite the Arab World culturally and ideologically as it is a crucial vehicle for thought.

Although Arabization began with the expansion of Islam through Islamic conquests in numerous places, including Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, and North Africa, it only became a systematic and structured process after the regions were free of Western colonization and Ottoman dominance. Governmental decisions led to the Arabization of education and the consolidation of Arab civilisation and ideology in educational curricula and media outlets.

For example, after the independence of Algeria in 1962, President Ben Bella made the decision to Arabize the country. The Algerian constitution then declared Arabic to be the official language in 1963. Following that, President Houari Boumediene broadened the scope of Arabization to encompass the administration, and numerous cities and streets have had their Amazigh names changed to Arabic or contorted names that have lost their cultural and historical connotations. Khadija Saad, an expert in Amazigh language and heritage studies in Algeria, wrote *Toponymy Amazigh*, a book devoted to Amazigh names and locations in the Aurès. This book, written in Arabic and released by Anzar in 2018, designates several names that have vanished as a result of the ongoing process of Arabization since independence. Because those extensive arabizing measures were not well received by all members of the community, Algeria recognized Tamazight as a national language in 2002, according to a constitutional amendment approved by a Parliamentary vote.

The decision, in turn, was not well greeted by many citizens, particularly those who adhere to Arab nationalism and consider the Amazigh language as a tenacious challenger to Arabic and a threat to the constants of the nation that define its identity, notably Arabic, which goes some way to explaining why various Arab, Francophone, and Berber movements are constantly at odds.

Many non-Arabs view the Arab World and Arab identity, which stretches from the Arabian Peninsula in the Levant to the far west of North Africa, as the nationalities that Western colonial powers or the Ottoman Empire attempted to impose on the peoples they colonized in terms of how they adopted it and how they imposed and applied it. But, unlike any other nationalism, linking Arabism to Islam and the granting of holiness to the Arabic language, as well as the consolidation of the idea that it is the only way to understand religion and correct legislation, the Arabic language and Arab nationalism have been granted ease of flow and acceptance among large groups of non-Arab peoples in the MENA region.

The historical role of Arabs in integrating the Arab-Islamic World through nationalism, which brought together many disparate affiliations into a unified entity, is undeniable, but the problem is that Arabism is essentially a racial entity. Arabs stood tough and rebellious in the face of any cultural invasion that could damage the original traits of Arab identity, resisting all attempts by Western intellectuals to contain them. On the other hand, denying that the many peoples included in this Arab World have their own peculiarities, histories, civilizations, and languages that are not treated with the same degree of recognition, respect, and legitimacy, which causes a sense of unfairness and injustice on the other side and leads to rebellion.

2-2-Amazigh

Another major ethnic group is the Amazigh (berbers), who are inhabiting North Africa. They can be found from the Mediterranean coast to the Niger River in the south, and from Egypt to the Canary Islands in the east. They were scattered as members of several tribes, each with specific cultural, political, and economic practices. Over

millennia, these peoples have been colonized by the most powerful colonial powers of the times, and they have experienced injustice, persecution and marginalization(Lucatello et al, 2020, p. 25).

Following independence, certain North African countries, such as Algeria, experienced periods of political turmoil during which the Arab Islamic trend, backed by large Arab countries such as Egypt, dominated. The trend pushed the Amazigh identity to the margins of politics, the media, and education, leading to the creation of a movement among the Amazigh and the reemergence of the identity dispute in the 1970s.

In 2001, King Mohammed VI of Morocco established the Institut Royal de Culture Amazighe (IRCAM), but it was not appreciated by all Amazigh protestors, and instead it created tension and conflict among activists who saw the institute as an attempt to control and weaken their movement by the government(Maddy-Weitzman, 2006, p. 81). In 2005, activists formed the Parti Democratique Amazighe Marocaine (PDAM), but it was dismissed by a Moroccan judiciary because it was deemed to be in violation of the Moroccan rules prohibiting the formation of ethnic parties(Michael, 2012, pp. 220-222).After considerable effort and protest, Moroccan authorities responded to the demand to recognize Tamazight as an official language of the country along with Arabic.

The Amazigh movement in Algeria was centred in the Kabylie region, where activists advocated freedom and social justice as well as the promotion of pluralism and respect for the Amazigh identity. The activity was accompanied by the formation of opposition political parties, such as the Rassemblement Pour la Culture Democratique (RCD) and the Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS), which were primarily supportive of the Amazigh cause. However, these parties had no effect on the authority to change their policies in response to the demands of the Amazigh movement activists.This failure prompted Amazigh radicals to turn around the "mak," a movement that began with demands to support Amazigh identity and achieve social justice but later evolved into an independence movement requiring autonomy for the Kabylie region.

The colonizers who passed through North Africa ruled the natives with iron and fire. In this world, pluralism, let alone power sharing, had no place. France has been attempting to erase the identity of Algerian people since 1830. During the French Colonialism the Algerian elite, like Ibn Badis, took it upon themselves to create and strengthen ties with the Arab and Islamic Worlds through lessons taught in mosques and Quranic schools. The Arab-Islamic World was seen as a safe haven for religious believers seeking assistance and support in their fight, and it was from this location that the roots of Arab nationalism sprouted.

The mono-rule that the North African countries (notably Algeria and Morocco) had grown accustomed to under their colonisation was maintained after freedom. The Arab Islamic ideology was adopted in governing the country. The new administrations not only failed to listen to those who called for plurality, but they also took harsh steps to pacify opponents and protesters. They believed that it was the right way to combat the identity that French colonization had attempted to impose on Algerians over the decades, especially given the lack of a standard Amazigh and conventional writing system.

The arabization process, then, began with the end of French rule. The Arab identity was imposed, and Arabic was designated as the sole working language at the state level, including education and administration. The implementation of Arabic was accompanied by an emphasis on Arab and Islamic culture and issues in the educational system, for which government sought to import teachers from Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. After a few years, some Amazigh activists resented the fact that their history and culture were not included in the curriculum.

This educational strategy of strengthening the Arab identity was accompanied by other political decisions in an attempt to build a coherent national unity that would serve as a bulwark against all the dispersals carried out by colonial forces prior to independence. President Boumediene, an Algerian graduate of Al-Azhar University in Egypt who was steeped with Arab philosophy and Islamic ideology, battled everything associated with the Amazigh identity throughout the 1970s.

He prohibited the use of the Amazigh language in education and ordered the closure of the Amazigh Studies Department in the capital, as well as the expulsion of the department's instructors, notably professor Mouloud Maamari (Abu-Haider, *Arabisation in Algeria*, 2000, p. 158). Although Arabic names were very popular among the Amazigh who named their sons 'Alaarbi', one of the most difficult decisions they had to confront was that preventing the newborns from being called Amazigh names and forcing the parents, instead, to choose an Arabic name from a list of names that had been compiled in advance (Bronson & Fields, 2009, p. 280). A similar phenomenon occurred in Morocco in 1996, when Amazigh names were banned and a list of legally permissible Arabic and Islamic names was approved (Seward et al., 2016, p. 63). In a similar line, intellectuals such as the Moroccan philosopher and thinker Mohamed Abed Al-Jabri have advocated for the banning of Amazighity not only in education but also in all forms of media (Madeleine, 2003, p. 119).

The political decisions taken by North African governments during the 1970's against the Amazigh identity provoked many different reversals, at times peaceful and at others violent such as the coup attempts in Morocco in 1971, and occasional protests where activists from the Berber community have been detained for flimsy reasons. Members of Agadir's New Association for Culture and Popular Arts were sentenced to prison after distributing an Amazigh-language calendar. On the first of May 1994, some other activists took part in peaceful Labor Day protests, chanting anti-discrimination chants and requesting that the Amazigh language should be recognized as an official language. As a result, they were charged with promoting acts that threatened order and security of the state (Rowe, 2019, pp. 318-319)

Similarly, Protests by the Amazigh began in 1980 during the "Tamazight Spring." When professor and writer Mouloud Mammeri was denied permission to give a lecture on ancient Kabyle poetry at the University of Tizi Ouzou by local Algerian authorities, riots erupted. This incident elicited a powerful response. Amazigh students demonstrated in Algiers and across Kabylia, demanding acknowledgment of Amazigh culture and language. The police used force to control the demonstrators, and some students were

arrested(Korpe, 2004, p. 117). Since then, protests have erupted on a variety of occasions, the most prominent of which are election dates, and have not abated in their emphasis on the need for identity recognition on the ground.

On the 9th of March 2011 King Mohammed VI gave a speech in which he recognized Tamazight as an official national language and part of Moroccan identity. But his speech did not clarify the mechanisms for applying this language as an official one, nor did he clarify the areas in which the use of this language would extend(Frosini & Biagi, 2015, p. 56)

Likewise, after his election, Algerian ex-President Bouteflika proclaimed that the country will take a new multicultural path, claiming that Algeria's heritage was Islamic, Arabic, and Amazigh(Abu-Haider, 2002, p. 162). Tamazight, though, was not recognized an official language of the country until 2016, when it was mentioned as an official language along with Arabic in the constitution of the same year. This followed a succession of violent protests in the Kabylie region, including the Black Spring riots in 2001 and the 2014 uprisings. Despite this, the country is still depicted and defined purely as an Arab country, with no mention of other ethnicities. Successive governments have been able to confine the Amazigh issue to a single region, the Kabylie, thus reducing and controlling the movement.

Coexistence between the Amazigh and Arabs was never an issue because of race or language. They always shared the homeland, religion and many customs. They welcome the Arabic language, which is crucial for comprehending the religion they embraced and welcomed, but they also seek to retain their cultural, linguistic, and social identities, as do any other ethnicities in the world.

2-3-Kurds

Kurds are an Indo-Iranian Aryan group who first settled in Kurdistan in prehistoric times(Al-Absi & Al-Absiova, 2018, p. 150-151);a mountainous region that stretches from south-eastern Turkey to Iraq's northernmost regions and into eastern Iran .The Kurds are one of the largest and most important minorities in the Middle East, with a population of

about 30- 40 million people. They are primarily prevalent in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, but they can also be found in other countries in varying basic amounts (Seevan, 2017, pp. 32-33)

Kurdistan was divided into autonomous emirates before 1514 AD, each of which was in charge of its own internal affairs. However, due to the abuse of Shah Ismail al-Safavi and other sectarian disagreements, the bulk of the emirates sided with the Ottoman Empire against the Safavids. Following the Battle of Chaldiran, the Ottomans and Safavids reached an agreement to split Kurdistan, with the majority of the country falling under Ottoman rule. The Ottomans, who committed to protect the Kurds in exchange for the Kurdish princes paying annual taxes to the Ottoman state and participating in any wars that the Ottoman state might be involved in (Eppel, 2016, pp. 28-29)

After this Ottoman-Kurdish agreement, the Ottoman and the Safavid Empires reached additional agreements on the division of Kurdistan and the establishment of borders. Kurdish insurgents began their fight against injustice and rejection of their right to live freely on their land while preserving their culture and language. The tough hilly topography of Kurdistan, as well as the involvement of several countries in the conflict, aided Kurdish militants and made it impossible to control and finish their battle (Zalme, 2021 , pp. 40-41)

The Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), signed in the aftermath of the defeat of Germany in World War I complicated the Kurdish situation. Foreign ministers from Russia, the United Kingdom, and France convened and agreed to divide the Ottoman Empire because it was a German ally, and because the majority of Kurdistan was under Ottoman control, it was included in the split, shattering all Kurdish hopes for legal self-determination (Charountaki, 2011, pp. 41-42). At the 1919 Paris Conference, and through their delegate Sherif Pasha, Kurds attempted to preserve the geographical integrity of Kurdistan and urge the world community to protect its people from persecution and violence. However, Kemal Ataturk was adamantly opposed to this and resisted its

implementation, particularly with the reemergence of Turkey as a powerful nation and the development of its relations with major powers such as the Soviet Union. The Treaty of Lausanne (1923), placed the Kurdish people under the sovereignty of Turkey and Iran, in addition to Britain and France, which were the mandate states of Iraq and Syria, respectively (Rubin, 2015, p. 547)

And so, tension and bloodshed have resumed, with no just remedies in sight : an armed conflict erupted in Turkey in the summer of 2015 between government forces and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) ; Iran's security forces clashed with militants from the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) ; In 1991, the Iraqi constitution recognized the Kurds, and in 2005, they were granted autonomy in their northern region , and in Syria, the Kurds have taken advantage of the conflict to establish an autonomous Kurdish administration in the north of the country (Stansfield & Shareef, 2017, p. 350)

The Kurdish conflict continues to be a struggle for a people who want to exercise their right to exist on a free land and live their identity in all of its linguistic, social, and cultural aspects without being subordinated to anyone or succumbing to any political or cultural containment processes, as well as an alarming example of how forced containment can lead to country destruction (Olson, 1996 , p. 10)

It should be noted that minorities are at odds in many other countries around the world for a variety of reasons. The developed countries, whose leaders brag in many of their speeches about their success in embodying democracy and building a legal system that ensures equal rights for all, are not an exception. Black Americans, for example, continue to die with their necks snapped beneath the feet of police officers, in public areas, and in front of cameras (Muller, 2021, p. 24). In many European countries, activists fuel separatist movements, and continue to fight for the right to thrive their cultures and exercise their lives in light of the freedom they seek. Minorities in more than 20 European countries, including France, Spain, Germany and Italy are now struggling to gain self-government. This demand is addressed by authorities in ways that are concentrated on ensuring the security and national unity of these countries (Anderson, 2018, p. 6).

2-4-Sunni-Shiite Conflict

The Sunni-Shiite conflict dates back to 1400 years, following the assassination of Caliph Uthman Ibn Affan. From the Battle of the Camel between Ali and Aisha, the Mother of the Believers, to the Battle of Siffin between Ali and the Iraqi people on his side, and Muawiyah and the people of the Levant with him, to the Battle of Nahrawan between Ali and the Kharijites who revolted against him, to the strife after Muawiyah's death, beginning with Karbala, a battle between Al-Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib, along with his family and companions, and Yazid bin Muawiyah's army, which historians consider as the event that caused the greatest division among Muslims(Kohlberg, 2020, p. 103)

What is undeniable is that the war between Sunnis and Shiites began as a political argument over the legitimacy of the caliphate, and then evolved into a theological conflict over time. Sunnis and Shiites disagree on a number of issues. The first bone of disagreement is infallibility, with the Sunnis believing that only prophets are chosen by God for infallibility, whereas the Shiites assume that prophets and imams are both chosen from the Ahl al-Bayt (people of the home), which includes Ali Ibn Abi Talib and his two sons, as well as nine sons from Hussein's descendants. An additional source of tension is that Sunnis elevate the Companions to a high status, proclaiming that they are all righteous and virtuous, and that they are the best of the creation of God after the prophets, whereas Shiites regard them as ordinary people, including both the righteous and the corrupt; the Shiite prayer is different; usufruct marriage and self-flagellation beating to the point of bloodshed are among many other differences(Rubin, 2015, p. 329)

Despite the fact that Shiites are spread across many countries, with the passage of time and the formation of peoples and establishment of states, entire nations have come to represent Shiites like Iran, and others have come to represent Sunnis like Saudi Arabia, turning this conflict into a regional conflict with a permanent struggle for hegemony and leadership in the Middle East. In a climate of sectarian fanaticism and accusations that

border on blasphemy, any attempt by moderate parties to bring the various sects together is thwarted, as was the case in 2008 when Saudi preachers refused to hold a World Islamic Conference in Mecca for debate with Shiites, claiming that such discussion is unworthy and a fitnah that should be avoided(Sisk, 2011, p. 45)

2-5-The Arab-Israeli Conflict

With a history spanning more than fifty years, the Arab-Israeli conflict is rated as one of the longest in contemporary history. Its origins can be traced back to the nineteenth century, to the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897, when the notion of establishing a recognized homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine was founded. The Sykes-Picot Agreement was struck in 1916, promising to grant the Jews a state in Palestine. After that, the Balfour Declaration was made in 1917 with the purpose of creating this state, which would be followed by the foundation of the Israeli state in 1948. The Arab-Israeli conflict occurred, then, as a result of the Jews' forcible appropriation of Palestinian land and the forced displacement of its inhabitants, following dozens of killings against Palestinians in a cruel, predatory long-planned manner, employing all awful methods to achieve their goals. This is in addition to the widespread use of religious myths by the Zionist creed based on its interpretations of the Torah, Talmud, and religious narratives to justify the occupation(Ismael & Ismael, 2011, p. 291). Israel remains a powerful source of tension in the region, engaging in conflicts with a variety of parties and emerging with more conventions that appear to be tricky and unpromising, containing more sources of agitation rather than a permanent, comprehensive resolution. In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization was founded to oppose Zionist colonization. However, this did not stop Israel from occupying the lands in Palestine, but it rather encroached on the Syrian Golan Heights and the Egyptian Sinai. Then there was the 1973 October War. The Camp David Accords were signed by Israel and Egypt five years after the October War. In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon, and in 2006, Israel and Lebanon went to war for the second time, lasting 34 days. Many treaties were signed between the first Palestinian intifada in 1987 and the second one in 2000, including the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1993 and 1995, which failed to achieve the desired peace (Takacs, 2015, p. 450)

The signature of the Deal of the Century under American auspices in 2020 is the most significant event in the Arab-Israeli conflict, since the Middle East peace plan of former US President Donald Trump will award Israel full authority over the most sacred and essential religious site in Palestine. Israel will exert control not only over the Old City, which Muslims refer to as Al-Aqsa Mosque, but also over around 30% of the occupied West Bank, including the Jordan Valley and Jewish villages, fueling worries of a second battle (Zelizer, 2022, pp. 287-288). Normalization efforts between Arab countries and Israel have recently escalated and become more apparent following years of hidden cooperation. This Partnership with Israel by some, though, has exacerbated more problems and tensions, such as accusations that Israel is using Pegasus espionage technology to spy in favor of some parties against their opponents, tensions caused by the admission of Israel to the African Union as an observer, as well as normalization with Morocco and the signing of security agreements with the Minister of Defense of Israel, which poses a security threat to Algeria. More Arab splits will almost definitely result from this normalization with Israel (Barany, 2021, p. 238)

3-CONCLUSION

This study highlights the wide ethnic and religious diversity in the Middle East and North Africa. A multitude of different components contend vehemently to establish their supremacy and rightness. All of these disputes have a detrimental effect on the stability of the region. The first point addressed in this paper is the conflict between those who adopted arabism, linked it to Islam, and welcomed its wider implementation as a major source of unity, and some ethnic groups like the Amazigh in North Africa and the Kurds in the Middle East who claim the same prestige, respect, and legitimacy as Arab identity, language, and culture. This controversy has recently transformed the region into a battleground for ideologies, endangering both national and regional consonance. The research also looks into the religious divide between Sunnis and Shiites. A centuries-old conflict that has evolved over time, especially since it has been embraced by political parties and entire countries vying for control. Furthermore, the paper includes the Arab-Israeli conflict, which continues to be one of the most serious sources of unrest in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly since the signing of the Deal of the Century in

2020, and the split of Arabs and Muslims into normalizers with Israel and adherents of the Palestinian cause.

The Middle East and North Africa region is enormously vast, and its breadth and extension expands the circle of diversity in it to include various ethnicities, religious and ideological sects. These human gatherings that have formed over centuries also reflect multiple historical events that brought peoples together to form states and territories, some of which coexist, and others continuously antagonize and fight. Historical memory still defines many of the interaction frameworks between the peoples of the Arab and Islamic world, and fosters feelings of hatred and enmity that surface at the least disagreement.

Authoritarianism of the triumphant peoples in the region, and their inclination to impose their languages and cultures produced a great deal of anger and hostility. The desire of Minorities to resurrect and enforce their heritage was spurred by marginalizing their history and distorting their rituals and traditions related with their identities. Opposing their languages as useless inspired many to fight for their existential and identity rights in a conflict that grows in intensity the more they are rejected and persecuted, while fanatic groups fuel separatist impulses that endanger the unity of many countries and the integrity of their national security.

Secessionist demands by some ethnic groups in the Middle East and North Africa, like those in other parts of the world, are reckless and irresponsible. If we believe that Iraqi Kurds, for example, have the right to separate and form their own state, what about Kurds in Iran, Turkey, and Syria? The most developed countries, which frequently meddle in the affairs of the MENA peoples and argue for the right of some sects to self-determination, oppose the concept of secession in their own countries and deter all attempts to undermine their security and national unity. These nations recognize that allowing a subgroup or region to secede will eventually lead other groups to seek independence. It is plainly not sensible for states to remain vulnerable to geographical and human decline whenever a group of people decides to push for independence. If

thousands of races and provinces around the world are allowed to secede from the countries to which they belong, the world will devolve into chaos.

Religious disparities between multiple peoples in the region and opposing sects even within the same religion, besides rivalry for influence and domination, limited these peoples to a circle of non-coexistence, excluding the different, vilifying, and inciting hatred against them. This discord progressed in some areas from hate speech to violent acts in a hostile environment that ensures the indoctrination and cultivation of grudges, which is then passed down from generation to generation as a corrupt inheritance that prepares the region for tensions, convulsions, and ongoing conflicts. We must therefore regard religion as an integral component of a viable solution based on a balanced and moderate discourse in the real and virtual worlds in order to positively contribute to the promotion of a culture of cooperation and harmony.

The lack of true democracy and the management of the problems of people and state policies by giving priority to vested concerns and ideologies in countries teeming with people from numerous and diverse backgrounds and religions is quite enough to generate hotbeds of tension and strife. Equally, the tendency of some countries toward normalization and the formation of alliances that serve interests in an inhumane violation of the rights of many downtrodden states and oppressed people will ensure the continuation of disputes and the creation of new foci that threaten regional peace. Furthermore, many of the conflicts that appear to be ethnic, religious, or even political in nature are actually created by social and economic distress as a result of the incapacity of governments to respond to the aspirations of their citizens for a better life. A failure that is frequently caused by the remnants of old colonial policies and also major powers who hinder any attempts at growth in developing countries that may compromise their national interests. Regimes must endeavor hard to meet the needs of their people by establishing policies to encompass everyone equally and ensure the protection of freedoms and human rights for all.

True unity does not come with the abolition of peoples, the annihilation of their civilizations, the fight against their languages, the marginalization and defamation of

their history and contempt for their customs and traditions. True oneness is achieved by acknowledging the other, accepting his distinctions, and erecting bridges to understanding and respecting his cultural and social diversity. The struggle for supremacy and dominance and the abolition of the other has shattered the ranks and rendered the weakest states in the region easy prey for Western powers who have begun to impose their decisions and conditions on a region shook by its own members in a "brothers-enemies" battle. Only when we comprehend that our diversity can contribute to our strength will we be able to attain true unity

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